

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 SAJ-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 NIC-01

DRC-01 /132 W

----- 093702

P R 091726Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2425

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, GW

SUBJECT: BRANDT RESIGNATION: PARTY HOPES AND FES

1. A QUICK POLL TAKEN BY THE WICKERT INSTITUTE ON THE DAY AFTER BRANDT'S RESIGNATION PUTS THE SPD AT ITS LOWEST POINT IN WICKERT'S HISTORY: ONLY 27 PER CENT OF THOSE QUESTIONED SAID THEY WOULD NOW VOTE SPD; 62 PER CENT WERE PRO-CDU; 7 PER CENT WERE PREPARED TO VOTE FDP, A LOSS OF APPROXIMATELY 2 POINTS BY THE FDP FROM OTHER, RECENT POLLS.

2. DESPITE THIS RECONFIRMATION OF THE SPD'S LOSS OF SUPPORT OVER THE LAST YEAR' THE CURRENT MOOD OF THE

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CDU (AS WE HAVE POINTED OUT) IS NOT AS OPTIMISTIC AS THE

EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK WOULD SEEM TO WARRANT. IT FEARS, FIRST OF ALL, THAT THE GREAT SYMPATHY FOR BRANDT THAT THE VOTERS HAVE SHOWN IN THE PAST LIES DORMANT BENEATH THE VOTERS' CURRENT DISCONTENT AND WILL SURFACE, PERHAPS EVEN IN THE LAND ELECTION IN JUNE IN LOWER SAXONY, IN THE FORM OF A SYMPATHY VOTE FOR THE SPD AND ITS NEW LEADERSHIP.

3. OF MUCH GREATER CDU CONCERN, HOWEVER, IS THE CERTAINTY THAT SCHMIDT WILL BE A MUCH MORE FORMIDABLE OPPONENT IN THE DAILY COMBAT IN THE BUNDESTAG THAN WAS BRANDT. THE CDU, THEREFORE, HAS THE UNEASY FEELING THAT AS BRANDT'S RESIGNATION FADES INTO THE PAST, THE SPD'S FORTUNES WILL TURN AROUND SO THAT BY 1976 SCHMIDT COULD HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF RE-ELECTION.

4. THE CDU'S RESPECT FOR SCHMIDT'S ABILITIES IS WELL-FOUNDED BUT, IN ADDITION TO THE OBVIOUS PROBLEMS OF SUBSTANCE THAT SCHMIDT WILL FACE AS CHANCELLOR, HE WILL BE TACTICALLY HAMPERED BY BRANDT'S CONTINUATION AS PARTY CHAIRMAN AND WEHNER'S PRESENCE AS FLOOR LEADER. WHILE SCHMIDT HAS LONG BEEN A TARGET OF HIS PARTY'S RADICAL LEFT, WHICH HE REGARDS AS A SERIOUS, PERHAPS FATAL, HANDICAP TO THE SPD, AND WILL NO DOUBT MOVE AS FAST AS HE CAN TO DESTROY OR AT LEAST NEUTRALIZE IT, HE DOES NOT NOW HAVE MUCH ROOM TO MANEUVER DIRECTLY AT HAND.

5. HE COULD TAKE ON THE LEFT IN THE BUNDESTAG IMMEDIATELY BY DENYING EPPLER A CABINET POST, OR HE COULD KICK THE INEFFECTIVE BOERNER UPSTAIRS FROM HIS PRESENT POSITION AS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SPD TO, SAY, THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, WHICH WILL ALL BUT CERTAINLY BE OPEN AS THE INCUMBENT, LAURITZEN, HAS CLOSE TO NO CHANCE TO BE RETAINED. BUT, IN EPPLER'S CASE, SCHMIDT WILL ALSO BE CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO KEEP THE SPD FROM FURTHER INTERNAL BICKERING AT THIS TIME AND MAY THEREFORE NOT FIRE HIM. IN BOERNER'S CASE, THE ALMOST CERTAIN SUCCESSOR, BRUNO FRIEDRICH, WHO IS

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COMPETENT AND ENERGETIC, OWES HIS CAREER TO WEHNER.

6. THERE IS, ALSO, THE PROBABILITY THAT SCHMIDT WILL HAVE MORE DIFFICULTY WITH THE FDP THAN WAS THE CASE UNDER BRANDT AND SCHEEL. LACKING SUPPORT OF HIS PARTY'S IDEALOGUES AND NOT HAVING THE WIDE AFFECTION ENJOYED BY BRANDT, SCHMIDT WILL PROBABLY BE FORCED TO DEPEND HEAVILY ON THE TRADE UNIONS. WHICH WILL SUPPORT HIM IN A CRACK-DOWN OF THE PARTY'S LEFT BUT WILL EXPECT TO HAVE THEIR WAY ON CO-DETERMINATION AND PROFIT-SHARING, TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AREAS IN WHICH THE FDP HAS TRIED, AND MUST CONTINUE TO TRY, TO DISTINGUISH ITSELF FROM THE SPD.

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7. THE ABSENCE OF AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY FOR THE SPD WILL BE, AS IT WAS UNDER BRANDT, AN ADVANTAGE, AT LEAST

IN THE SHORT RUN, FOR SCHMIDT CAN POINT OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT SIMPLY CANNOT PASS THE LEGISLATION THE UNIONS WANT. IN THE LONGER RUN, HOWEVER - I.E., THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION IN 1976 - THERE MIGHT BE UNION PRESSURE ON HIM TO SEEK AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY FOR THE SPD, A POSSIBILITY THAT AT THIS TIME IS REMOTE INDEED.

8. THE MAKE-UP OF THE CABINET AND THE GOVERNMENT DECLARATION, STILL PLANNED FOR ANNOUNCEMENT MAY 17, SHOULD TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT PROBABLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THESE AREAS.
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